

PROTOCOL FOR POSSIBLE HUMAN RABIES EXPOSURE

The San Juan County Health and Community Services Department is charged with assuring all potential human rabies exposures are effectively managed. Human rabies is 100% fatal unless properly treated. Therefore, it is imperative that procedures be established to insure the consistent and effective follow-up of all potential human rabies exposures. Program management will involve both the Environmental Health and Personal Health Sections of the Health Department. Below are step by step protocols for handling all possible human rabies exposures.

I. **Responding to Complaints:** Route incoming calls, regarding potential exposures, to Environmental Health for risk assessment. Route the calls following the hierarchy below:

- | | | | | | |
|----|----------------|----|--------------|----|--------------|
| A) | Mark Tompkins | C) | Nancy Best | E) | John Manning |
| B) | Gary Covington | D) | Vicki Heater | | |

II. **Risk Assessment:** The risk of human rabies will be assessed based on the exposure event and the animal involved. The assessment will include:

- A) Completion of the State Form entitled **"Laboratory Report & Animal History Rabies"**. Send copy of form with specimen (if specimen is sent).
- B) Completion of the form entitled **"Rabies Exposure Assessment and Intervention Form"** for each victim that has received a significant exposure. Significant exposures include but are not limited to; bat bites, exposure to bats where a bite cannot be ruled out (ie: bat in bedroom of sleeping person or small child), and unprovoked bites from animals exhibiting unusual behavior or signs of rabies. To help determine "significant" exposures, contact Dr. Frank James at (360) 201-2505. If a response is not received within 1 hour contact State EPI (206) 361-2914 for advice. ***Be sure to get the primary care provider name and accurate weights of all exposed.***

The completed forms will be placed in a Red file folder for ease of retrieval and routing purposes. If a significant exposure has occurred proceed on to Step III. For non-significant exposures proceed directly to Step VI.

III. **Contacts:** Once a significant exposure has been identified it is imperative that the individuals responsible for follow-up actions have been notified.

- A) **Health Officer.** Contact Dr. Frank James at (360) 201-2505 to inform him of the significant exposure. May have already been contact in step 2 above. *Note: Contact must be by phone, email is not an acceptable alternative.*
- B) **Washington State Epi Office.** Contact the State Epi office at (206) 361-2914 to report the incident. A copy of the Laboratory Report and Animal History may also be faxed to the Epi office at (206) 361-2930.
- C) **Communicable Disease Nurse.** The EH staff will communicate directly with the designated CD nurse or the Personal Health Services Manager. The file folder containing the Laboratory Report & Animal History Rabies and the individual Rabies Exposure Assessment and Intervention forms will be transferred to the CD nurse.

IV) **Specimen Management:** The Department is responsible for receiving and shipping animals involved with significant exposures. Proper management is needed to assure staff minimize their exposure to potentially rabid animals. The following steps shall be taken to reduce the risks of exposure.

A) **Receiving:** Animals should only be brought to the department if a significant exposure has occurred. Staff will notify the client if a specimen is required and the procedures for delivering it.

- 1) Only dead animals will be accepted. Care must be taken not to destroy or damage the animals brain tissue.

Bats - Should be delivered whole. Advise the client to kill the bat without damaging the head. Automobile carburetor fluid or starting fluid can be used to kill the bat. However, advise the client not to drown the bat in the fluid. Instead place a cloth soaked with fluid into the container to asphyxiate the bat. Double bag the specimen in ziplock bags to deliver to the Health Department.

Larger Animals (dog or cat) - Only the head will be accepted. Refer the client to a veterinarian for assistance. The following veterinarians have agreed to euthanize and sever the animal heads for a fee: Animal Hospital of the San Juans, Island Veterinary Clinic, San Juan Veterinary Clinic & Lopez Animal Clinic. **The client is financially responsible for any services rendered.** Double bag the specimen in ziplock bags to deliver to the Health Department.

- 2) Instruct the client not to bring the animal into the building. Staff will collect the specimen outside and place it into the appropriate container. Staff collecting the specimen shall be limited to; 1) Mark Tompkins & 2) Gary Covington.

Special note: *The Lopez Animal Clinic will receive, box and ship specimens from Lopez Island.*

- 3) If the specimen cannot be delivered immediately it should be refrigerated (not frozen) until delivered.

B) **Packaging:** State Epi provides containers and boxes for shipping the specimens. Place the specimen (bags and all) in the plastic container (provided) while minimizing hand contact. Clearly label the each container if multiple containers are shipped in the same box. Place the container into the blue box with styrofoam sides. Place ice packets around the container to keep cool. Attach a copy of the Laboratory Report and Animal History Form to the box lid. Label and seal the box.

C) **Shipping:** Ship the specimen container by airfreight. Kenmore Air or Aeronautical Services can be used. Kenmore is preferred as they land on Lake Washington only blocks from the Lab. Regardless of the service, contact the Lab and inform which airlines has the specimen, as they arrange for pick and deliver to the Lab. Finally give a copy of the bill to Carol for billing purposes.

V) **Distribution of Rabies Testing Results:** The Lab will generally notify the Environmental Health staff of the test results. The results must be effectively communicated between Environmental Health, Nursing and the client.

- A) **Positive Results: Notify** the CD nurse and Health Officer of the positive rabies exposure. The nurse or Health Officer will contact the client and inform them of the results, recommended treatment, side effects, and billing.
- B) **Negative Results:** Update the records and notify the CD nurse. EH will contact the client and inform them of the results. Provide information regarding exposure risk reduction. Staff are directed to the following Center for Disease Control's web page for rabies information:

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvrd/rabies/Ques&Ans/q&a.htm>

- VI) **Follow-up Action:** The Health Officer will review and sign-off all investigations. EH will place file folder, containing the completed forms, in the Health Officers incoming mail basket for his review.
- VII) **Record Retention:** All records will be retained in the Personal Services department. A filing cabinet has been marked "Rabies Investigations" and is to be used for filing all completed investigations.